Loomis
Japan
1155

CHRISTIAN PROGRESS IN JAPAN.

BY

Rev. H. LOOMIS.

FUKUIN PRINTING COMPANY, LTD.,
YOKOHAMA.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2017 with funding from
Columbia University Libraries

https://archive.org/details/christianprogres00loom

CHRISTIAN PROGRESS IN JAPAN.

Rev. H. Loomis.

Count Okuma, the Premier of Japan, is the founder and Head of the Liberal Party, and also of Waseda University. The following is an extract from an address of his at the dedication of the Chinese Y. M. C. A. Dormitory.

"The fatal defect in the teaching of the great sages of Japan and China is, that, while they deal with virtue and morals, they do not sufficiently dwell on the spiritual nature of men; and, any nation that neglects the spiritual, though it may flourish for a time, must eventually decay. The origin of modern civilization is to be found in the teachings of the sage of Judea, by whom alone the necessary moral dynamic is supplied."

The Hon. S. Ebara was for some time Chairman of the House Committee of the dominant party, and has been promoted to the House of Peers, in recognition of his distinguished services as a statesman. This is all the more remarkable because he is one of the recognized Christian leaders in Japan.

In a recent address he said, "The greatest need of Japan is said to be economic development; but the basis of economic development is confidence, and confidence will only come as the fruit of moral and religious education, based upon

Christianity. Our need is Christian character, based on Christian education."

At the dedication of the new Y. M. C. A. building in Kobe addresses of congratulation were delivered by the Governor, the Mayor; and the Vice-President of the Chamber of Commerce sent a letter saying; "Religion is the life of our country. Without religious education strong men will not grow up, international peace will not be possible, and pure honest government will not exist. May this building be the means of promoting the religious life which is at the bottom of all things good."

One of the evidences that Christianity has won a high place in the estimation of the Japanese officials is the annual grant of 10,000 *yen* ($5,000) for the support of the Korean Y. M. C. A. in Seoul. It was begun by Prince Ito, and has been continued by his successor.

The recent opening of a Christian kindergarten at Toyama was attended by the Governor, the Inspector of Police, the Minister of Education, and other well known officials of the province. The Governor's address was one of congratulation on the completion of the building, and the acquisition on the part of the city of such a valuable asset to education.

It is reported that "The address of the Mayor was brimful of good advice to the parents in which was blended Christian ideals."

Rev. Mr. Dunlop of Nagano has been asked by the Principals of the different schools to

deliver an address on Christianity. Miss Winn of Morioka has also been invited by the head of a school to speak to the students on Christianity.

A number of teachers of the Kanazawa Commercial School have formed themselves into a Bible class and asked Rev. Mr. Dunlop to teach them. This class meets weekly in the home of Principal of the school.

The Principal of the Commercial School at Takaoka, in the same region, has a Bible class for some of the teachers, which is held weekly in his home. This class was formed at the request of the teachers who wanted help in studying the Bible.

A Young Men's Christian Association teacher in Osaka writes, "This year I am teaching three Bible classes weekly for English speaking students. The first is in the Sunday School of the Osaka Church, the second is for students of the Y. M. C. A. evening school, and the third for students of my own school.

Secretary Phelps of the Kyoto Y. M. C. A. has opened a new Bible class for University men.

One of the representatives of the Y. M. C. A. has been teaching in a Government School at Odawara. As the place is noted for its conservatism and anti-Christian spirit he felt much hesitation about proposing the organization of a class for Bible Study, as has been done in other schools. To his great delight he was approached by one of the teachers and asked to give instruc-

tion in the Bible, and the school building was to be used as the place of meeting.

Rev. H. Topping of Morioka writes that Prof. Fukumoto of the Middle School has a class of seventy students in the life of Christ. The Students Association in the school of Agriculture and Forestry is actively led by two of the Christian professors.

At a meeting, held in the Methodist Boys School at Nagasaki, there were fifty-eight who decided to become Christians.

As a result of a ten days canvass the membership of the Nagasaki Y. M. C. A. was increased from 204 to 617. So great are the crowds that nightly throng the lobby, library, and game rooms the directors are forced to consider plans for an enlargement. In a canvass for an increase in the membership the Head English teacher in the City Commercial School secured 53 names, and was then asked to stop, as an increase of that number from a single school would become more than could be properly assimilated.

At the close of the campaign the Secretaries called upon the Governor ; and, after an explanation of the purpose of the organization, the Governor voluntarily offered to become a member, and wished the movement every success.

Rev. Mr. McIlwaine writes that he was summoned by telegram to a village which he had visited formerly, and where only one man had showed any sign of interest. Arriving there

he found thirteen earnest seekers; and so deep was the general interest that from Tuesday till Friday, he writes, "I talked with inquirers almost without intermission from early morning till midnight every day."

At another village all the teachers in the school have been baptized, through the influence of a Christian teacher.

A few years ago Mr. W. M. Vories was employed as a teacher in the Government School at Hachiman. Being a very earnest Christian he gave much time and attention to Bible teaching and other forms of religious work. The result was that, on account of his success, the Buddhists made a protest and procured his dismissal. He then adopted some other means of support, and gave his time very largely to religious work, not only in Hachiman but in other localities. He has since completed a three story Y. M. C. A. building for railway men at Baba, in which are included a dormitory, reading, lecture and class rooms. The Sunday School has an attendance of 120, and from 100 to 450 attend lectures and religious meetings.

"At the dedication service," writes Mr. Phelps, "Representative officials vied with one another in expressing hearty congratulations. The Ken Superintendent of Education, representing the Governor, paid a splendid tribute to the heroic achivements of the founder of the Mission. The Mayor, the Master of the Station, and the chief men of wealth, spoke with a warmth of

appreciation of more than conventional signification. The leading journal of the province, formerly hostile, printed several strong editorials commending the work of the Mission." The dormitory rooms are full, and daily applicants are being turned away.

At Maibara he has a Sunday School of 60; besides leaders and religious meetings. Associated with him are one full-time secretary, one part time, one evangelist, and four night school teachers.

One of the missionaries, who has recently made a tour through a considerable part of Japan, reports that in some instances the Primary School teachers keep the children away from Sunday School, but in the Hokkaido the attendance at Sunday School seems only limited by the size of the room, and the teachers patience in staying while one room full is turned out and another set of children comes in.

At a lecture meeting, which was held after the formation of the Federation of the Protestant Christian Denominations in Japan, addresses were made by Bishop Honda, Hon. A. Hattori, and others; and it is estimated that there was an attendance of six thousand.

The Secretary of the Japanese Y. M. C. A. at Seoul reports that he is very happy, and has all the hand to hand evangelism he can do.

Miss E. R. Gillett writes of her work among Railway men that in most of the larger stations (probably about 200) there are club rooms where

regular lecture meetings are held, and the officers allow the Railway Mission one half, or three quarters of an hour to give a Gospel address; and then the railroad business is resumed. At other times and places Gospel meetings can be held. Some places are open to the Christian message, but closed to all others.

The station men at Nagano have a meeting twice a month, at which Rev. Mr. Norman is allowed 40 minutes for the Gospel address.

On the first Sunday after the dedication of the Ginza Church in Tokyo Bishop Harris baptized 42. On the same evening 30 new inquirers were registered. More recently additional inquirers have been received. There were 74 baptisms during the year.

The Kaigan Church in Yokohama has now a membership of 1.300. The Shiloh Chuch has a membership of 741.

The Fujimicho Church in Tokyo has a membership of 1,008. There were 81 additions during the past year, although the pastor was absent during seveal months of the time. The membership consists mostly of men and students; among whom are several officials.

The public library at Utsunomiya was thrown open for five nights for religious services. There were twenty enrolled as inquirers; and all were men of good families, and holding responsible positions in the community.

One of the missionaries reports that he has distributed approximately 100,000 tracts, and

had received over 1,000 letters of inquiry concerning religious matters.

Of a late Annual Meeting of the representatives of the Congregational churches in Japan the Rev. Mr. Olds says; "The key note was struck in the first evening meeting when the recurring phases were such as these. "Holy ambition," "What willt thou have me to do?" "A new devotion to God and Christ, rather than to the church and work." "Ninety thousand members before the next meeting" &c., &c. The Sunday sermon by Dr. Harada on the theme, "The Absolute Personality and the Enduring Enterprise," from the text, "Christ and Him crucified, " was a strong and dignified expression of the common impulse."

Of the general tone and character of the meeting he says "There was no thought of defeat: —only of a long, hard campaign, with ultimate victory."

In an address before the Conference of Federated Missions, the Rev. E. H. Van Dyke D.D., President of the Conference, said, "That the leadership of the Christian movement in Japan should now pass into the hands of the native church is as natural as that the blossom should follow the bud, and fruit the blossom; and should give us, as well as our constituency at home, a sense of profound gratitude and rejoicing.

"That the Christian forces generated in this land will ultimately coalesce into four or five organizations, or federations, with local eclesiastical

autonomy and native leadership, is only the sure dictum of facts already largely accomplished.

"To the missionary body of Japan has come first the honor of taking the position of John the Baptist; and, say of our Japanese brethren with true heart and joyous; "They must increase while we decrease."

The following incident illustrates just what is going on in the country. A Buddhist priest in the Hokkaido recently came to a Christian doctor for treatment, and the Doctor asked the priest about the present religious condition in Japan. The priest did not know that the doctor was a Christian, and spoke his mind very freely; the substance of which was as follows:—"We are in very great trouble, and don't know what to do. Christianity has hitherto been without recognition and influence. As the Government gave us their support we were quite content. But, by the recent action of the Home Department, Christianity has been elevated to the top, and we must now hustle or we shall be left without following or influence."

One of the missionaries reports that the Buddhists are especially active in promulgating their own doctrines wherever Christian work is being done. They are beginning to realize, what is evidently true, that a new day is dawning in Japan, and the rising generation is no longer satisfied with the teachings of the past. It is reported that of 5,000 students in the Imperial University 50 are classed as Buddhists, 60 Chritians, and 3,000 Agnostic.